THE MERSHON CENTER at The Ohio State University

Stephen Flanagan

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Institute for National Strategic Studies

"Sustaining U.S. Alliances and Partnerships"

Thursday, April 13, 2006
12 p.m.
Mershon Center
Room 120

This lecture is open to the public. Lunch will be served to invited students and faculty who RSVP to Viki Jones no later than Monday, April 10, 2006.

Stephen J. Flanagan has been Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies since January 2000 and also serves as NDU Vice President for Research. He held several senior positions in government between 1989 and 1999 including Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Central and Eastern Europe, National Security Council Staff (1997-99); Associate Director and Member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff (1989-95); and National Intelligence Officer for Europe (1995-97). Earlier in his career, he was a Professional Staff Member of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (1978-83).

Flanagan has also held several academic and research positions including Senior Fellow, Institute for National Strategic Studies, and faculty member, National War College, National Defense University (1987-89); Executive Director, Center for Science and International Affairs and faculty member, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (1983-87); Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow and Research Associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London (1983-84).

He has published numerous books and articles on international security affairs, and is the co-author of *Challenges of the Global Century* (2001), the report of the NDU Project on Globalization and National Security, and co-editor of *The PLA and China in Transition* (2003). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Editorial Boards of the journals *Joint Force Quarterly* and *International Security*.

Flanagan is a recipient of the State Department's Superior and Meritorious Service Awards, as well as decorations from the Presidents of Poland and Romania , for his work on U.S.-European relations. He earned his A.B. in political science from Columbia University in 1973 and his Ph.D. in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1979.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the United States has been involved in a long-term struggle against an unconventional but dangerous enemy. Stephen Flanagan, director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at National Defense University, argued that this global military and social operation has forced U.S. policymakers to rethink their global priorities. As

such, the traditional alliances America has had since World War II have come under close scrutiny. In particular, two questions have emerged as the center of an intense debate in American policy circles. First, are these alliances built for a different era still useful, or have they have become a constraint on the United States? Second, can they be sustained in the post-Cold War and now, in the post-9/11 era?

he end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of globalization that was initially viewed in an optimistic light. The growing interdependence of peoples around the globe was seen as promising and beneficial for all. But eventually, and especially after Sept. 11, Flanagan said, the dark side of globalization became apparent to U.S. policymakers as global dynamics seemed to fuel ethnic and religious conflict. In this new era, defense and military analysts began to rethink what constitutes friends and enemies to the United States, with many countries falling somewhere in between. The pressing question became how to advance U.S. interests in the multiple hazards of the new global security environment.

With the end of the Cold War and the conferral of the sole superpower status on the United States, Flanagan argued, many neoconservative policymakers concluded that America could pursue its interests on its own. In other words, because the United States had unparalleled power, alliances were no longer necessary. Allies are not willing to spend as much on defense in any case; thus, they are not of much help to the United States.

This is especially true, the neoconservatives reasoned, because America today is at a unique point in history: It has the opportunity to shape the world in its image. Thus, these analysts concluded, the United States should move to more flexible arrangements such as building temporary coalitions for specific tasks rather than long-term, fixed alliances which can constrain America in the pursuit of its legitimate interests.

However, contrary to what this vision predicted, Flanagan said, U.S. alliances have persisted even 16 years after the Cold War ended. America has maintained alliances with NATO and Asian partners, who are working with us in Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent, in Iraq . The reason these alliances persist, Flanagan argued, is that despite America 's overarching power, the current problems and threats are not amenable to a national solution because they are global in nature.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing global war on terror exemplify this trend. The United States cannot act as the world's sole policeman. Going alone in conducting extensive operations, particularly in Iraq, has drained U.S. finances and compromised chances of success. More explicitly, it has given rise to a discernible gap between U.S. rhetoric of high objectives and the low likelihood of achieving success. In countering a dangerous and global threat such as al Qaeda, Flanagan says, the United States needs its allies more than ever if it hopes to succeed.

Furthermore, Flanagan argues, the multi-faceted process of globalization has made multi-lateralism even more important to international affairs. The United States stands to gain legitimacy for its actions by gaining the support of its international allies. Enlisting partners also eliminates the inclination in other governments to counterbalance a hegemonic power. The recent behavior of European powers is a prime example in this regard, Flanagan said. U.S. actions in Iraq have given credence to the idea that the European Union should act as a buffer to American unilateralism. The United States should not encourage this idea, particularly among traditional allies who have much in common with us and whose capabilities are largely complementary.

Flanagan also argued that the global nature of problems facing the United States means that we need greater flexibility to deploy and sustain troops in remote areas. U.S. military bases have traditionally been in Europe, built to counter a threat emanating from Eurasia. However, in recent years operations have increasingly shifted to Central Asia and Middle East . This has brought about a shift in the nature of military deployment. Now, instead of old-style military bases, the United States is building cooperative security arrangements in new regions with limited American intervention.

Although many analysts predicted the dissolution of NATO in the post-Cold War era, this has not happened. Instead, Flanagan pointed out, NATO has expanded to include 10 new members and provides invaluable help to the United States in Afghanistan. In fact, the Bush administration has moved to repair strained trans-Atlantic relationships after the initial confrontation over Iraq because the United States not only needs allies to share the burden in fighting terrorism, but also to bring about global stability and security.

Finally, Flanagan argued, it is also important for the United States to work cooperatively with European allies in peacetime. For many developing countries, and particularly for the strategically important region of Central Asia, it is vital to build a civil society after conflict. Thus, U.S. alliances are important not only in the military realm, but also the civil realm, and this is a positive development in our conflict-ridden world. It also points to the importance of sustaining alliances in the new era, both in Europe and Asia.